

KAHO`OLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION

FY 1999, 2000, 2001

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ROLE AND ORGANIZATION

The Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC) was established to manage Kaho`olawe, its waters, and its resources in trust for the general public and for a future Native Hawaiian sovereign entity. Kaho`olawe is an ancient Hawaiian Island on which Native peoples lived for nearly a millenia. During the 19th century it was used as a ranch, a prison, and a place of banishment. For two hundred years a large feral goat population denuded the island of vegetation. From 1860 to 1941 a small ranching operation took place on the island. Soon after World War II began, the island was seized by the US Navy, the ranching operations were closed and a bombing range established.

After years of community protest against the bombing, a lawsuit was filed in 1976 to force the US Navy to comply with federal environmental and religious freedom laws. In 1981 a consent decree was entered by a federal judge requiring compliance with federal historic preservation, historical preservation and religious freedom laws, which required regular access to the island by Native Hawaiians. In 1990 the bombing was ordered stopped by President George Bush. Soon after a federal commission, the Kaho`olawe Federal Conveyance Commission was formed. It recommended that the island be returned to state control.

In 1993, Title X of the FY 1994 Military Appropriations Act required the island to be returned to the state, and authorized \$400 million for the clean up of the island until November 2003.

On May 7, 1994 the island was formally returned. Federal and state legislation was

passed in 1993 requiring an end to military use, return of title to the state of Hawai`i for cultural, historic and educational and the establishment of the Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Commission to manage the island..

When the island was returned it was seriously degraded. The dirt on the island was full of unexploded bombs and metal debris, it had lost its forest cover, its natural basal lens of water had been completely depleted, it had suffered a loss of two millions tons of soil annually and its near shore reef areas had become choked with soil run off. The shallow reef area offshore had become dangerous to fishermen because of all the unexploded bombs in the water.

The Kaho`olawe Reserve consisting of the island of Kaho`olawe and 90 square miles of surrounding ocean was established in 1993, in recognition of the island's special cultural, environmental, and historical value as a treasure and resource for all of Hawai`i's people.

A vision statement created by the Kaho`olawe Use Plan, written in 1995, outlined not only the environmental restoration of the Reserve, but also the restoration and growth of Native Hawaiian cultural practices through

- Manages Kaho`olawe and surrounding ocean.
- 2/3 of the island is cleared of unexploded ordnance
- KIRC is actively restoring Kaho`olawe with native plants.
- One-third of the island is classified as hardpan.

human access and interaction. A key element of the plan since then has been the reforestation of the summit of Kaho`olawe and the removal of certain kinds of trees, such as *koa*, that draw water from the island's limited fresh water resources. KIRC planners hope that successful reforestation will lead to the return of the cloud cover that once surrounded the peak of the island and the resumption of the fog drip necessary for the recharge of the basal lens of the island with freshwater.

Since 1994, \$306 million has been appropriated and a contract has been awarded to Parson UXB Joint venture not to exceed \$280 million. This contract was awarded in 1997. As of October 1, 2002 approximately 16,000 acres of Kaho`olawe has been surface cleaned of unexploded ordinance. Of the 16,000 acres that have been cleaned, 2,266 acres have been cleared to subsurface levels of four feet, and are suitable for public use for agricultural or recreational purposes. These figures are according to the US Navy. Although the original original plan called for 100 percent surface clearance of the island and 30% subsurface use plan, it is anticipated that only 60% of the island will be surface cleaned and 8% subsurface cleaned when the US Navy departs in 2003.

In the high hazard areas, such as the target areas, 4.7 millions of ordinance related scrap and target materials have been cleared and decontaminated and 60,000 items of unexploded ordinance have been removed since 1993. An extensive archival study was conducted by the contractor to determine the nature of the different kinds of bombs dropped on the island.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Kaho`olawe Island Reserve Commission staff work in the following program areas: environmental restoration, ocean resource management, culture and education and fisheries reserve management.

Environmental restoration includes

planting native plants and installing soil conservation structures, alien species control which consists largely of weeding. This work is largely dependent on volunteers. In a typical year 200 volunteers come to the island to camp, work and plant native vegetation. The volunteers are flown from Maui to Kaho`olawe by helicopter.

The ocean resources management staff conducts baseline surveys of fish, limu, sedimentation, and other protected marine animals in the Reserve. They work with faculty and students from the University of Hawai'i and the Division of Aquatic Resources to manage the natural and cultural resources of the Reserve.

The KIRC's Culture/Education Program worked closely with several Native Hawaiian organizations to facilitate cultural access and visits to Kaho`olawe including: Nā Pua No`eau Center for Gifted and Talented Native Hawaiian Children, the Polynesian Voyaging Society, Hui o Wa`a Kaulua, the Protect Kaho`olawe `Ohana, Malama `Āina, and Nalehuakumakua. KIRC planned and conducted a ceremony to open the planting season at Lua Makika, the first section of land the KIRC has been given access to during the clean-up project. The KIRC Culture/Education Program also continued to conduct monthly cultural training workshops for the new incoming Navy project workers

SURVEY OF RESOURCES

Kaho`olawe is 45 square miles or approximately 28,000 square acres. Used for target practice by the U.S Navy for fifty years, the island is said to contain thousands of unexploded bombs (UXO). For the past 9 years, the US Navy at the direction of the US Congress has swept the island for UXO.

As a result of the bombing and two hundred years of over grazing by goats and cattle, much of the natural vegetation has been stripped from the island leaving approximately one third of the surface area (11,000 acres) as hardpan. Hardpan areas have little or no vegetation or soil and are made up of the compacted red clay left behind after the topsoil has been removed. The

hardpan areas are very dense and chemically infertile.

Much of the rest of the island is covered with mesquite and various grasses. Island restoration efforts center around 15 species of endemic plants including vines, shrub or grass species, the `āweoweo, pā`ū o Hi`iaka, wiliwili and kawelu. Dryland species predominate because the island receives only twenty five inches of rain per year.

The Kaho`olawe reserve includes 90 square miles of ocean-. KIRC has an Annual Operating Budget of approximately \$5.8 million. Its members include the following: a seven member commission, a twenty member staff, and one appointed deputy attorney general. 1 office on Maui, a boat, several trucks, a hut on Kaho`olawe and a small office in Honolulu. The reserve commission funding comes from ten percent of the total federal clean up appropriation allocated by Congress. At the present time approximately \$20 million dollars has been set aside in an interest bearing state trust fund to fund the state's restoration efforts and planning for the island.

ADMINISTRATION

HIGHLIGHTS

From 1998 through 2001, the KIRC established and expanded programs of environmental and cultural restoration and management. The Restoration program completed a Restoration Plan, and began projects for erosion control, alien species control, and native plant revegetation. KIRC took over 700 volunteers to the island and planted more than 26,000 native plants and spread over 500 pounds of native seeds. Volunteers have come from diverse groups such as: Wai`anae High School, Castle High School, Wailuku Hongwanji; Youth Conservation Corps, Protect Kaho`olawe `Ohana, and the Huntington Beach Hawaiian Civic Club. KIRC also worked with the SCS Moloka`i Plant Materials Center, the UH Lyons

Arboreteum, and the National Tropical Botanical Garden to re-seed native grasses and to protect rare & endangered plants on Kaho`olawe.

The KIRC implemented its Ocean Resource Management Policy, through purchase and operation of the 30-foot, all aluminum research vessel Hakilo. Over 200 volunteers, students, and collaborating organizations have assisted the KIRC in over 100 ocean trips to undertake sediment monitoring, pelagic and bottom fish monitoring, coral and limu surveys, and protected species monitoring. Kaho`olawe has been determined to be a Hawaiian monk seal habitat and appears to serve as a bottom fish hatchery due to the KIRC's strict and protective access/fishing regulations. The KIRC held public hearings and adopted new administrative rules (HAR13-261) that incorporate Native Hawaiian concepts and sensibilities to protect and sustain the resources of the Reserve.

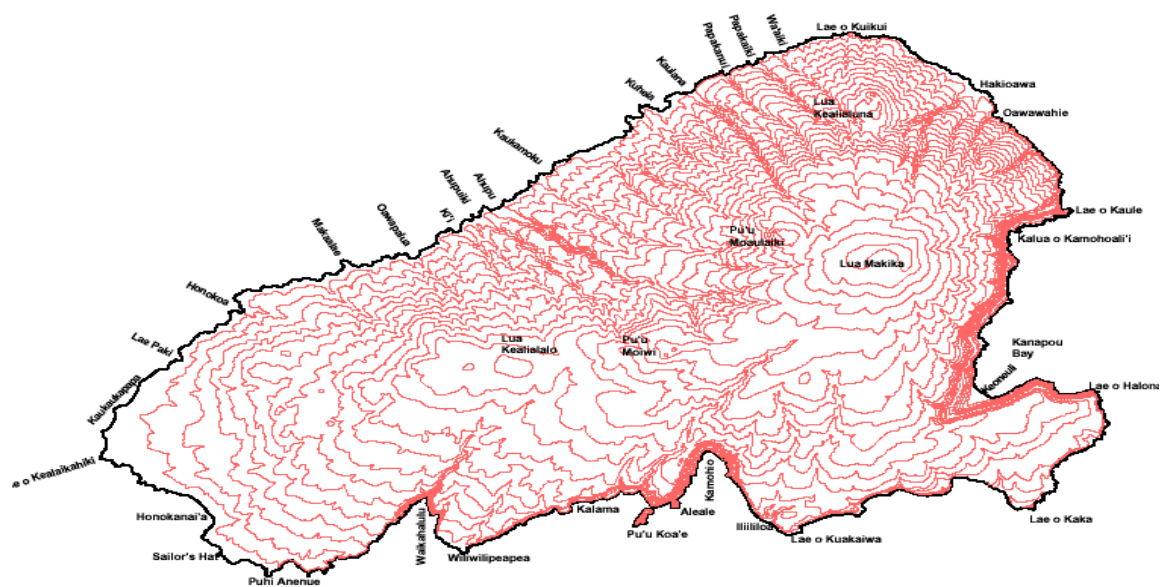
Also during this four year period, the KIRC continued to represent the State as the single point of Contact for the U.S. Navy-led clearance of unexploded bombs (UXO) from Kaho`olawe. The Navy controls access to Kaho`olawe and is clearing the island pursuant to a federal law that authorizes the Navy project from 1993 through 2003. Much of the KIRC's efforts during 1998 through 2001 consisted of assisting the Navy with its clearance project, as well as planning for State management of the island after the Navy leaves in 2003.

The KIRC secured State land near the Kihei Boat Ramp and drew up plans for a boat house as the first phase of planned Kaho`olawe Educational and Administrative Center to be located on the south shore of Maui.

There is both anticipation and uncertainty about Kaho`olawe's future. The uncertainty is magnified because the Navy-led cleanup of unexploded ordnance and environmental restoration will not achieve the levels agreed to and anticipated by the Navy and the State in their 1994 MOU. It is estimated that as much as one third of the island will be left with dangerous

unexploded ordnance. There will be areas that will be cleared, and areas that will not be cleared. Control of access and the management of risks and resources will pass to State in November 2003. Risk management will necessarily be more program-intensive and more expensive. There will be more frequent monitoring for previously undiscovered ordnance. The federal government will have to respond to more discoveries. The extent of non-ordnance environmental assessment, cleanup and restoration is unknown. The KIRC Use Plan, traditional cultural activities, educational activities, and restoration activities will commence – but not as fully as anticipated, and with restrictions some of which are known and some of which are not yet known.

FIGURE 72.



11,000 acres approximately 1/3 of the island of Kaho`ola we is classified as hardpan. Hardpan areas have little or no vegetation, are very dense, and chemically infertile. KIRC is working hard to restore the hardpan areas with vegetation. One-third of the island remains covered with unexploded bombs.

